



March 24, 2008

Chairman Jim McDermott
Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support
U.S. House of Representatives
B-316 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Responses to Inquiries for the Congressional Record

Dear Chairman McDermott:

On behalf of the American Public Human Services Association and its affiliate, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, I respectfully submit these responses to your questions regarding the testimony given at the hearing on the Invest in KIDS Act on February 27, 2008.

- 1. Which activities and services are most needed for families in crisis? (i.e., mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, child care, housing assistance?)**

Families in crisis need a full continuum of services to successfully recover and move forward. Mental health, substance abuse treatment, housing, child care, employment assistance, support systems and many more services are often needed to help a family stabilize and reunite. Nationally, populations and their needs vary. All states have their own diverse populations that they support within their child welfare system. States are experts in supporting families and their needs. States need flexible funding to provide the services most needed by families in their systems. They require a greater federal investment in the full continuum of service provision, including prevention and post-permanency services to best serve families in need.

- 2. How are states coping with the "look-back" standard? How does it affect the provision of child welfare services in states across the nation?**

States are struggling to cope with "look-back" standards. Most states are facing budget deficits at this time. Since 1998, 35,000 fewer children have been eligible, and states have lost an estimated \$1.9 billion in federal foster care support. As fewer children qualify for Title IV-E eligibility each year, states are required to fund child welfare with state funds. This places a huge burden on state budgets.

Title IV-E funding is not only linked to the "look-back" and limited funding to states, but it also does not allow for the flexibility in funding that states need to provide services. The current federal framework does not support a

comprehensive service system that encompasses prevention, efforts to move children quickly and safely to permanency, and post-permanency services.

Arizona is one example of the positive results seen from Title IV-E waivers. As stated in my testimony: *In Arizona, we were fortunate to receive a IV-E demonstration waiver that has allowed us to provide intensive, flexible services using IV-E funds to expedite reunification of children with their families. Our initial results are very promising. In the first year of this project, children and families who participated in the program saw a 43 percent higher rate of reunification than the comparable control group. We appreciate the subcommittee's effort to expand opportunities for states to develop programs such as our intensive family intervention program.*

Waiver projects like this exemplify the kind of services and results that states could see if they were given flexible funding. De-linking Title IV-E from the 1996 income eligibility standard is a necessary step for states to best serve children and families that enter the child welfare system. Providing flexibility to this funding and increasing other additional flexible funding or allowing states to reinvest their funding is also necessary for states to increase positive outcomes.

3. **We are very concerned with the scope of transition services that are now offered to youth who emancipate, or “age out,” from the foster care system before they find a permanent placement. What are your experiences with working with older foster care youth? What suggestions do you have to improve services for youth who “age out” of foster care?**

APHSA and NAPCWA are also concerned with service provision for older youth who “age out” of the foster care system. States strongly support the notion that no child should turn 18 without a permanent home. Unfortunately, as studies and research show, young adults continually exit the system without a permanent home or supportive connections to adults.

States require flexible funding for prevention services in order to provide the necessary services that allow families to remain intact. If states could invest more on the front end, fewer children would enter foster care and be in the position of aging out of the system.

States support several recommendations that would lead to improved service provision and better outcomes for older youth in foster care. Some of these include:

- Extension of federal funding for young adults to the age of 21;
- Increased Chafee and Educational Training Voucher funding to help prepare youth enter adulthood;
- Federal funding for subsidized guardianship and relative placements;
- System collaboration with mental health, education, health, workforce, housing, vocational rehabilitation and other systems;
- Youth in this population should receive priority in these other systems for support.

NAPCWA recently surveyed states regarding their service provision for this population. The information will be available on the NAPCWA web site this year. APHSA and NAPCWA will also be preparing a series of briefing papers that highlight some of this information for members of Congress and their staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at (602) 542-6008 or Anita Light, NAPCWA Director, at (202) 682-0100. Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Deibert', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kenneth Deibert
Deputy Director
Children, Youth and Families
Arizona Department of Economic Security